

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS****RECEIVED  
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The claims are as follows:

1. (Previously presented): A method of interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links comprising:
  - defining a link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria including throughput for round-robin scheduling and throughput for a next available link scheduling;
  - classifying the plurality of communication links according to a link affinity grouping;
  - enabling and disabling selective ones of the plurality of communication links according to the link affinity grouping; and
  - activating a particular link selected from among the enabled communication links using a selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity grouping.
2. (Original): The method according to Claim 1 further comprising: analyzing performance of the enabled communication links individually and in aggregate.
3. (Original): The method according to Claim 2 further comprising: determining whether the aggregate performance has declined to below a predetermined limit.
4. (Original): The method according to Claim 3 further comprising: generating an alert signal when the aggregate performance declines to below the predetermined limit.
5. (Original): The method according to Claim 2 further comprising: identifying an individual link wherein, based on the analysis, disabling of the identified link from the aggregate in the link affinity grouping will improve aggregate throughput.

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6. (Original): The method according to Claim 5 further comprising:  
automatically disabling the identified link.
7. (Original): The method according to Claim 5 further comprising:  
recommending disabling of the identified link.
8. (Original): The method according to Claim 2 further comprising:  
recommending, based on the analysis, appropriate individual links for  
inclusion into a link affinity grouping based on criteria selected from  
among a group consisting of:  
potential throughput, link path security ratings, logical unit (LUN)  
group criticality ratings, potential throughput according to the  
link selection process, link cost, link availability, primary and  
secondary replication classification, inclusion or exclusion of  
multiple link affinity groups, inclusion of partial or full link  
affinity groups, and link direction.
9. (Original): The method according to Claim 2 further comprising:  
determining, based on the analysis, whether altering assignment of links of  
two link affinity groups will improve throughput of both groups.
10. (Original): The method according to Claim 2 further comprising:  
selecting a link for activation in a data replication operation comprising:  
maintaining a list of available links;  
including a link on the list when the link becomes available;  
activating the next available link on the list;  
sending information over the activated next available link;  
receiving the sent information at a remote site; and  
reordering the received information into a proper order at the remote  
site.

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11. (Withdrawn): A method of communicating data in a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links comprising:  
interconnecting a plurality of communication links between a local array and a remote array;  
determining which of the plurality of communication links is currently available for usage;  
maintaining a list of links available to carry the data;  
including a link on the list when the link becomes available;  
activating the next available link on the list; and  
sending data over the activated next available link.

12. (Withdrawn): The method according to Claim 11 further comprising:  
receiving the sent data at the remote array; and  
reordering the received data into a proper order at the remote array.

13. (Withdrawn): The method according to Claim 12 further comprising:  
destaging the reordered data to disk in a data replication application.

14. (Previously presented): A storage system comprising:  
an interface capable of interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links, the plurality of communication links having a diversity of data-carrying capacity and performance; and  
a controller coupled to the interface that assigns the plurality of communication links into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria including throughput for round-robin scheduling and throughput for a next available link scheduling, and that controls link selection based on link affinity group assignment.

15. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 14 wherein:  
the controller analyzes performance of the enabled communication links individually and in aggregate.

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16. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 15 wherein: the controller manages synchronous and unordered asynchronous disk array replication by communicating data over all available links in a round-robin order, determines whether the aggregate performance has declined to below a predetermined limit, and generates an alert message for performance declines below the limit.
17. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 16 wherein: the controller identifies individual links wherein, based on the analysis, disabling of the identified link from the aggregate in the link affinity grouping will improve aggregate throughput.
18. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 15 wherein: the controller manages ordered asynchronous disk array replication by enabling and disabling selective ones of the plurality of communication links according to the link affinity grouping, and activating a particular link selected from among the enabled communication links using a selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity grouping.
19. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 18 wherein: the controller selects a link for activation in a data replication operation by: maintaining a list of available links; including a link on the list when the link becomes available; activating the next available link on the list; sending information over the activated next available link; receiving the sent information at a remote site; and reordering the received information into a proper order at the remote site.
20. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 18 wherein: the controller determines whether the aggregate performance has declined to below a predetermined limit, and generates an alert message for performance declines below the limit.

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21. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 18 wherein: the controller determines appropriate individual links for inclusion into a link affinity grouping based on criteria selected from among a group consisting of: potential throughput, link path security ratings, logical unit (LUN) group criticality ratings, potential throughput according to the link selection process, link cost, link availability, primary and secondary replication classification, inclusion or exclusion of multiple link affinity groups, inclusion of partial or full link affinity groups, and link direction.

22. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 18 wherein: the controller identifies individual links wherein, based on the analysis, disabling of the identified link from the aggregate in the link affinity grouping will improve aggregate throughput.

23. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 18 wherein: the controller determines, based on the analysis, whether altering assignment of links of two link affinity groups will improve throughput of both groups.

24. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 15 wherein: the controller manages disk array replication using a protocol converter by communicating data over all available links in a round-robin order over identical throughput links.

25. (Previously presented): An article of manufacture comprising:  
a tangible controller usable medium having a computer readable program code embodied therein for interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links, the computer readable program code further comprising:  
a code causing the controller to define a link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria including throughput for round-robin

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scheduling and throughput for a next available link  
scheduling;

- a code causing the controller to classify the plurality of  
communication links according to a link affinity grouping;
- a code causing the controller to enable and disable selective ones  
of the plurality of communication links according to the link  
affinity grouping;
- a code causing the controller to activate a particular link selected  
from among the enabled communication links using a  
selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity  
grouping; and
- a code causing the controller to analyze performance of the enabled  
communication links individually and in aggregate.

26. (Previously presented): The article of manufacture according to  
Claim 25 further comprising:

- a code causing the controller to determine, based on the analysis,  
appropriate individual links for inclusion into a link affinity grouping  
based on criteria selected from among a group consisting of:  
potential throughput, link path security ratings, logical unit (LUN)  
group criticality ratings, potential throughput according to the link  
selection process, link cost, link availability, primary and secondary  
replication classification, inclusion or exclusion of multiple link affinity  
groups, inclusion of partial or full link affinity groups, and link  
direction.

27. (Previously presented): The article of manufacture according to  
Claim 25 further comprising:

- a code causing the controller to maintain a list of available links;
- a code causing the controller to include a link on the list when the link  
becomes available;
- a code causing the controller to activate the next available link on the list;
- a code causing the controller to send information over the activated next  
available link;

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a code causing the controller to receive the sent information at a remote site; and

a code causing the controller to reorder the received information into a proper order at the remote site.

28. (Withdrawn): An article of manufacture comprising:

a tangible controller usable medium having a computer readable program code embodied therein for communicating data among a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links, the computer readable program code further comprising:

a code causing the controller to interconnect a plurality of communication links between a local array and a remote array;

a code causing the controller to determine which of the plurality of communication links is currently available for usage;

a code causing the controller to maintain a list of links available to carry the data;

a code causing the controller to include a link on the list when the link becomes available;

a code causing the controller to activate the next available link on the list; and

a code causing the controller to send data over the activated next available link.

29. (Withdrawn): The article of manufacture according to Claim 28 further comprising:

a code causing the controller to receive the sent data at the remote array;

a code causing the controller to reorder the received data into a proper order at the remote array; and

a code causing the controller to destage the reordered data to disk in a data replication application.

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30. (Withdrawn): A storage system comprising:  
means for interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links;  
means for determining which of the plurality of communication links is currently available for usage;  
means for classifying the plurality of communication links according to a link affinity grouping;  
means for enabling and disabling selective ones of the plurality of communication links according to the link affinity grouping;  
means for activating a particular link selected from among the enabled communication links using a selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity grouping;  
means for analyzing performance of the enabled communication links individually and in aggregate; and  
means for determining whether the aggregate performance has declined to below a predetermined limit.

31. (Previously presented): The method according to Claim 1 further comprising:  
defining the link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria further including characteristics of link path security, link cost, and conditions of link availability.

32. (Previously presented): The method according to Claim 31 further comprising:  
defining the link affinity grouping (LAG) based on a plurality of criteria further including classification as primary and secondary link groups for replication of a logical unit (LUN) group, classification into intra-LAG groups, classification into inter-LAG partial inclusion groups, classification into inter-LAG full inclusion groups, classification as outbound (failover) links, and classification as inbound (failback) links.

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33. (Previously presented): The storage system according to Claim 14 further comprising:

the controller that assigns the communication link plurality into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria further including characteristics of link path security, link cost, and conditions of link availability.

34. (Previously presented): The storage system according to Claim 14 further comprising:

the controller that assigns the communication link plurality into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria further including classification as primary and secondary link groups for replication of a logical unit (LUN) group, classification into intra-LAG groups, classification into inter-LAG partial inclusion groups, classification into inter-LAG full inclusion groups, classification as outbound (failover) links, and classification as inbound (failback) links.

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